

**Volume I  
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### **QUOTABLE**

**The worst thing about new books is that they keep us from reading the old ones.**

— Joseph Joubert

### **The back page**

The National Assessment for Educational Progress has some good news and some bad news to kick off Family Literacy Month

Editorial Arts is tapped to publish, expand **LEARN Alive!** beginning in February

# **LEARN Alive!**



## **LEARN notes progress at Vista site as AmeriCorps members eye departures**

By MARTIN JONES WESTLIN  
Editor/publisher, **LEARN Alive!**

If a suite of executive-size office furniture (or anything close to it) is blocking the doorway the next time you visit the County Library's Vista branch, just do your best to squeeze in around it. It won't be there long. Chances are it's headed for one of the far interior walls in preparation for the opening of LEARN's North County branch, months in the making and only now showing physical signs of inevitability — not the least of which is the recruitment of Misa Aldenderfer. Aldenderfer, 22, is LEARN's newest full-time AmeriCorps member, and she's been dividing her time between the Vista and El Cajon branches orienting herself to the tutor's life. The daughter of archaeologists, Aldenderfer spent half her childhood in Peru and recently took a degree in international studies from UCSD. She's considering a career trek into nonprofits and social services and claims to have fully recovered from the aftermath of an international incident (see below).

Meanwhile, longtime AmeriCorps stalwarts Liam Kerr and Marty Westlin are facing some changes of their own (see page 2).



#### **THE LEANING TOWER OF MISA**

Misa Aldenderfer, LEARN's newest full-time AmeriCorps volunteer, found both hands full during a fabled trip to Europe. It's reported that the Leaning Tower of Pisa toppled a split-second after this photo was taken as Aldenderfer inadvertently turned to stifle the sneeze you see generating here. Aldenderfer was uninjured in the mishap, but Italy's archaeological community was really, really mad for, like, three solid weeks.



**The San Diego County Library's Vista branch, located at 700 Eucalyptus Ave, is the site of LEARN's North County venue. LEARN offers literacy services to the approximately 422,000 San Diego County adults who struggle with issues involving reading and writing.**

## Family literacy figures reflect losses, gains for U.S. children

The National Assessment of Educational Progress is as eager as the next guy to note that November is Family Literacy Month. Even so, its appraisals sometimes figure in statistics that reflect the opposite trend.

The group, administered by the U.S. Department of Education, notes in a recent report that parental literacy is one of the most important indicators of a child's success. But children of functionally illiterate parents, it says, are twice as likely to be functionally illiterate themselves.

The assessment group adds that by age 4, children who live in poor families will have heard 32 million fewer words than children living in professional families. About 20 percent of children live in poverty, the group says.

The group's latest report states that between 1992 and 2005, there was no significant change in the percentage of fourth-graders performing at or above basic literacy levels. The percentage of those performing at or better than above-average levels increased during this time. The percentage of eighth-graders performing at or above basic levels was higher in 2005 (73 percent) than in 1992 (69 percent).

**Liam Kerr**

Traditional wisdom says the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. That's not entirely true, at least for those of us who live on earth's unceasingly curved surface. And if you're with Literacy AmeriCorps, that line becomes increasingly erratic amid the hectic pace between and within engagements.

But the applicable laws of physics change on Tuesday, Nov. 28. That's when Liam Kerr and Marty Westlin, LEARN's AmeriCorps members since January, will attend the California Library Literacy Services' *Life After AmeriCorps* training and graduation in Irvine. We'll have more next month on the meeting and on LEARN's expanding relationship with AmeriCorps.

Approximately 250,000 Americans have enrolled in AmeriCorps programs since the organization's founding in 1994. Currently, 70,000 AmeriCorps volunteers aged 17 and over assist millions of Americans in issues involving literacy, public safety, education, homeland security and the environment.

**Marty Westlin**

## LEARN Alive!

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## QUOTABLE

There should be a little voice in your head like the storyteller is saying it. And if there's not, you're just lookin' at the words.

— LaKeisha (San Francisco 10th-grader)

## LEARN Alive! changing hands

Editorial Arts — the San Diego company with the undersize budget and the oversize publisher — will assume editorial control of **LEARN Alive!** beginning in February.

The monthly newsletter, launched in April, apprises County Library staff and tutors on LEARN's activities. LEARN, the letter's current publisher, seeks to serve the estimated 422,000 San Diego County adults who struggle with reading and writing.

Martin Jones Westlin, Editorial Arts' group publisher, said his company will expand the newsletter from two to four pages. Westlin, who spearheaded the newsletter, is a member of Literacy AmeriCorps and has tutored several LEARN clients since January. He departs LEARN at the end of December.

## Life After AmeriCorps: *Time's (almost) up!*

## Hard to believe it's been 40 years

But if you're reading this on Nov. 3, that's exactly how long ago Congress enacted the federal Adult Education Act, which expanded the 1964 Economic Opportunity Act. The Economic Opportunity Act had spawned the Adult Education Program, which made instruction in reading and writing allowable for states. That's another way of saying the federal government sees adult illiteracy as an issue for states to resolve rather than the national disgrace it is.